

THE MAN WHO BLEW THE WHISTLE ON PERCHLORATE AND NDMA WATER CONTAMINATION

The Sacramento Bee

► OBITUARIES

Rocket scientist was man of many passions

By Steve Gibson
Bee Staff Writer

Ronald G. Pizer, a high school dropout who became a rocket scientist and founded two electronics research firms in Folsom, died Sunday of complications from leukemia.

He was 67.

Until a few weeks ago, he was chairman of Folsom Research Inc., a privately held company that does electronics engineering research for Fortune 500 companies.

Previously, he had co-owned Electro-Physics Laboratories Inc., which was purchased by General Electric after he and his partners developed ultrasound technology for medical applications.

Mr. Pizer, an amateur historian and avid outdoorsman who served as a mentor to many, was also known for his twice-a-month poker games, which drew an eclectic circle of friends, young and old, wealthy and poor.

"The poker rules were quite simple," explained one of his partners, Robert Cribbs. "You would buy in for \$10, and there were no limits on bets."

"But once you were out of money, you couldn't leave until the game was over. You had to serve drinks and food to the other players. So you might have some kid being served by a millionaire."

Mr. Pizer was born in New Britain, Conn., son of Martha Koster and Louis R. Pizer, and dropped out of high school when he was 16. He joined the Marine Corps on his 17th birthday.

After getting out of the Marines, he earned an engineering degree from the Milwaukee, Wis., School of Engineering in 1955, with an emphasis in electronics.

Mr. Pizer then worked for Hughes Aircraft for a year, leaving in 1956 for a job with Aerojet, where he helped develop rocket engines for the Titan intercontinental ballistic missile.

He left Aerojet in 1967 and,

with partners Cribbs and Joe Reade, founded Electro-Physics Laboratories in Folsom. They sold the company to GE in 1979.

For decades, he was active in Rotary, first in Folsom, where he was president of the Rotary Club, and later in Cameron Park, where he resided.

He was a member of the American Rocket Society and a former chairman of the El Dorado County Recreation Commission, serving on that body from June 1, 1981, until June 1, 1989.

"He certainly didn't fit the image of a Marine sergeant, which is what he was at one time," Cribbs said. "He was a softhearted guy who didn't like guns, and who didn't like violence."

But he retained a lifelong love of adventure. Every summer he would take canoe trips of at least 200 miles in the wilderness of either Canada or Alaska, Cribbs said.

And for a dozen years in a row, he hiked to the top of Mount Whit-

ney, at 14,495 feet the highest point in the lower 48 states, with family and friends.

Because Forest Service permits are needed to make the Whitney climb, Cribbs said, "every year he would have his daughter go down there and be first in line to get one."

Another friend, Kurt Davis, remembered him "serving as a mentor and bringing all kinds of people together for picnics, hikes, and low-budget adventure trips."

Davis called Mr. Pizer "one of those people who really enrich the community by being inclusive, outgoing, friendly and unselfish with their time and knowledge. A person who avoided the spotlight, he was a loyal friend and always seemed to be looking for ways to promote and encourage those around him."

Mr. Pizer also organized frequent trips to the Nevada and California deserts to explore ghost towns. "He knew where every one was, and he'd been there," Cribbs



Ronald G.
Pizer

He was "one of those people who really enrich the community," a friend said.

said. "He knew the history of every one. He was quite an authority on the 49ers, too."

Another friend, Benjamin L. Foulk, described him this way: "He's like the mayor of El Dorado County. Everybody knows him."

Survivors include his wife of 44 years, the former Gloria Lemanczyk; a son, Ronald J. Pizer of Rancho Murieta; a daughter, Cindy Pizer Zak of Placerville; a brother, Arnold Pizer of Rochester, N.Y.; a sister, Joyce Boschen of Pittsfield, Mass.; and two grandchildren.

In his memory, the family asks that friends make a special effort to reach out and help someone in the community who needs assistance. There will be no services.